

CANNOCK CHASE COUNCIL
NOTES OF THE MEETING OF THE
HEDNESFORD COMMUNITY FORUM
THURSDAY 11 MARCH, 2010 AT 7.00 P.M.
AT THE AQUARIUS BALLROOM, VICTORIA STREET, HEDNESFORD

PRESENT: Councillors

Burnett, J. (Chairman)
Burnett, G. (Vice-Chairman)

Ball, G.D. Pearce, Mrs. L. J.
Grice, Mrs. D. Yates, Ms. W.

Other Councillors present:

County Councillor J. Bernard, Hednesford & Rawsley Division

Officers:

T. McGovern, Director of Organisational Improvement
B. Phillips, Head of Planning and Regeneration
G. Watson, Economic Development Manager

Also present:

Members of the Public – approximately 40
Hednesford Town Council Representative
Mr. David Wright, Staffordshire County Council
Inspector Pat Shannahan, Staffordshire Police, Chase Division

28. Apologies

No apologies were received.

29. Declarations of Interests of Members in Contracts and Other Matters and Restriction on Voting by Members

No declarations of interest were received.

30. Notes

The Notes of the meeting held on 10 December, 2009 were agreed as a correct record.

31. Questions for Staffordshire Police

Concern was raised by residents on the apparent low level of policing in Hednesford. Inspector Shannahan reported that there were two dedicated Police Constables and three P.C.S.Os for the Hednesford area. A neighbourhood response team was on call 24 hours per day 7 days per week. A resident explained that he had caught a group of lads

kicking the door to his daughter's house and when he had reported this to the Police he had received no response. Inspector Shannaghan agreed to look into the matter and report back to the resident. Concern was also raised with respect to youths from Kingsmead school congregating in an alleyway and that residents could feel intimidated. Former County Councillor Susan Woodward informed the Forum that the school undertook good citizenship working and she undertook to report the concerns back to the Headmaster. Residents considered that the level of policing in Hednesford had decreased. Inspector Shannaghan reported that the Police only had a certain amount of resources available, Wimblebury & Heath Hayes had their own dedicated Police Officers as did Norton Canes and Chadsmoor. A Member expressed concern that Police Officers from Hednesford were sometimes called to Cannock. Inspector Shannaghan confirmed that this could happen, as could Officers from Wombourne also being asked to attend should a major incident occur. Generally, however, Police Officers remained in their dedicated areas.

Mr. Allsopp from the Aquarius enquired whether the disused premises next to the Ballroom could be used by the Police. Inspector Shannaghan explained that there were a number of posts around the Hednesford area that the Police used instead of having to go back to the Cannock Station and the possibility of using others, such as the pavilion at the park was being looked into. However, in the main, it was preferred to have the Police on the streets. Mr. Allsopp said they were welcome to use the Aquarius during opening times.

32. Update regarding Hednesford Town Centre

Mr. G. Watson provided the Forum with an update on the redevelopment of Hednesford Town Centre. He reported that progress had been made on Phase I which was at the Rugeley Road end of the town. A revised application had been submitted due to the impact of the recession. The proposal had been approved subject to a Section 106 agreement being signed which it was anticipated would be finalised within the next few weeks. Subject to the S106 and other legal requirements being completed, it was considered that site assembly work could potentially commence at the end of the summer.

Complex negotiations were being undertaken with regard to Phase 2 of the regeneration scheme. The developer, St. Modwen, had purchased factory buildings on Victoria Street, Hednesford from ATP Industries Group under an agreement which required them to relocate the business to a site elsewhere. Suitable sites elsewhere in the District were currently being considered. An extensive planning application would be forthcoming and consultation carried out, with residents having the opportunity to comment on the proposals. Following the demolition programme, a new 80,000 sq.ft. foodstore would be constructed on Victoria Street, subject to planning approval being received. The Hednesford regeneration scheme would also include a total of 48,000 sq. ft. of non-food retail space, a 17,500 sq. ft. discount foodstore, new community facilities and a new 648 space car park. The existing bingo club and Drill Hall would be relocated to new purpose built premises.

Mr. Allsopp asked whether it would remain on its current site. Mr. Watson informed the Forum that it could not remain in situ but a replacement facility would be provided.

Concern was raised by dance teachers in attendance that should the Ballroom not

continue or not be replaced without a gap in time, they would need to seek alternative facilities, or their businesses would close. It was commented that the small businesses needed the support of the Council.

Mr. Bob Phillips reported that he was pleased to see the Ballroom back in use. The Council would work with Mr. Allsopp to examine how such issues could be overcome, if at all possible, and that there was no imminent threat to the Aquarius. The ultimate aim was to provide a facility with a long term future.

Mr. Watson reported that the Hednesford regeneration scheme had been discussed for the last few years at meetings of the Forum and the fact that the Aquarius would have to make way for the scheme had been known for sometime. The Council recognised the role of the Ballroom to the community and would endeavour for there to be minimal disruption.

A detailed programme would be considered and it was hoped that matters could be resolved. The Council did not have precise details of the timescales involved and when matters became clearer, further discussions would be held with Mr. Allsopp.

The Chairman enquired what size the dance floor would be in the new proposed facility and was informed that the replacement facility it was planned to be 10,000 sq. ft., but such details were being worked on. It was reported that the intention was to provide a facility similar to the Aquarius in a modern shell. Mr. Watson explained that the Council recognised the quality of the dance floor and its uniqueness.

33. Pendle Hill – Gritting

Mr. David Wright from Staffordshire County Council reported that to help protect the property in Bond Way whose fencing had been damaged by cars leaving the road at the island, concrete bollards had been erected and road markings placed on the road. It was explained that it was a 30 mile an hour area. Concern was raised that three cars had left the road and ended up in the property's garden and it was requested that the road surface be tested. Mr. Wright informed the Forum that road testing would be carried out.

With respect to road gritting, it was explained that the County Council had held the same level of salt stock as for the last 5 years, however, it had been a prolonged winter. It had become evident that deliveries were falling behind due to the high demand and all local authorities had had to cut back to critical rates and only 'A' and 'B' routes were being gritted and currently the position was the same. The County was also not able to refill the grit bins. He explained that the County was concerned that they had not been able to provide the service they normally provided.

The Chairman enquired whether stocks were now being built up and was informed that this was being looked into. Central Government had instructed that 'A' and 'B' roads only could be gritted, or where there was a only a sole road into a community. Emergency services could call out for a group of people to be made available to carry out gritting manually.

Residents complained that they had seen recycling operators emptying the grit bins which should have been for their use. The Chairman undertook to investigate this matter.

Residents did not feel reassured that ambulances could reach their houses in the Pendle Hill area. It was reported that some grit bins had been empty for a while and Mr. Wright explained that they should be filled up in the September of each year. He explained that snow ploughs could not have been used as the snow was of insufficient depth.

A Ward Member considered that certain bins were not in the appropriate place and that they should be reassessed. Mr. Wright undertook to meet with the Member on site with respect to this issue.

It was reported that the 'Clarence' service stated that hills would be gritted. Mr. Wright explained that residual salt that was not suitable for machines was spread manually and volunteer labour was sometimes used, but they were not able to cover areas in the same time taken by mechanical gritters.

The problem of grit being removed from bins and not replaced would be investigated by the County.

34. Forward Agenda for Future Meetings

Form were distributed for questions to be included on the next agenda of the Forum. Any questions to be submitted by Monday, 24 May, 2010.

35. Date of Future Meeting

The Chairman reported that the next meeting of the Forum was scheduled for Thursday, 10 June 2010, however, this was subject to being agreed at full Council.

The meeting closed at 8.25 p.m.

CHAIRMAN